

THE WEAKENING OF AMERICA: AN EXAMINATION OF  
NATIONAL RESOLVE

A Research Paper

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by

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## *Contents*

|                                  | <i>Page</i> |
|----------------------------------|-------------|
| DISCLAIMER .....                 | ii          |
| PREFACE .....                    | iv          |
| ABSTRACT .....                   | vi          |
| INTRODUCTION.....                | 1           |
| Statement of Problem.....        | 1           |
| Purpose.....                     | 2           |
| Need for the Study .....         | 2           |
| Scope and Limitations .....      | 2           |
| Methodology.....                 | 3           |
| UNDERSTANDING RESOLVE.....       | 4           |
| Power and Will .....             | 5           |
| Levels of Interest .....         | 6           |
| Cost-tolerance.....              | 9           |
| HISTORICAL EXAMPLES .....        | 11          |
| Vietnam .....                    | 11          |
| Beirut, Lebanon .....            | 14          |
| Somalia.....                     | 15          |
| Summary.....                     | 18          |
| CRITICAL ANALYSIS .....          | 20          |
| Quantification .....             | 21          |
| Levels of National Interest..... | 22          |
| Cost-tolerance .....             | 22          |
| Level of Threat.....             | 23          |
| The Formula .....                | 24          |
| Equation.....                    | 25          |
| Historical Application .....     | 26          |
| CONCLUSIONS .....                | 28          |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY .....               | 30          |

## *Preface*

This project began taking form during the first three courses of ACSC. It became obvious to me during my studies that resolve played an important role in how a nation applied its instruments of power, particularly its military instrument. That sparked the interest in exploring what role resolve played in America's past and the influence it has upon our nation today. It has been an interesting and enlightening quest. What started out as the obvious took many twists and turns along the way and ultimately ended up as the attached paper. For those of you who accept the challenge and read ahead, I hope you find it both informative and thought provoking. If you do, then I have accomplished what I intended.

I feel that one other point needs to be made. While the historical examples used in this paper represent failures in American resolve, they do not represent failure in the spirit of the American soldier. No braver warrior has ever taken to the field of battle, sea, or air, than the American soldier. The following words were said by General Patton to his troops following the Bastogne operation reflect this spirit:

From the bloody corridor at Avranches, to Brest, thence across France to the Saar, over the Saar onto Germany, and now on to Bastogne, your record had been one of continuous victory. Not only have you invariably defeated a cunning and ruthless enemy, but also you have overcome by your indomitable fortitude every aspect of terrain and weather. Neither heat nor dust nor floods and snow have stayed your progress. The speed and brilliancy of your achievements is unsurpassed in military history. My New Year wish and sure conviction for you is that . . . you will continue

your victorious course to the end that tyranny and vice shall be eliminated,  
our dead comrades avenged, and peace restored to a war-weary world.

These words still ring true as a testimony to the will and fortitude of the American soldier no matter what conflict or military operation one wishes to discuss.

With that said, it is now time to pass along my thanks to those who help make this project possible. First, I would like to thank Dr. Karl Magyar. My discussions with him during the early portion of my work proved to be very beneficial in the direction I eventually took. His candor was quite refreshing.

Last but definitely not least, my sincere thanks to my faculty research advisor (FRA), Major Paul “Condor” Berg. His eagerness to oversee my project after I had twice been turned down, re-energized my spirit. As an instructor and a FRA, Major Berg’s enthusiasm and focus have been both contagious and inspirational. Without his expert help, this project would have never taken form. He calls it as he sees it, a quality I admire; thanks Paul.

## ***Abstract***

### **Statement of Problem**

Considering the dramatic changes in the world power structure, the United States has an opportunity to be the only true super power. Its ability to exert itself in this area however is hampered by the lack of national resolve it has exhibited in the past. If the United States is truly going to seize this opportunity, it must carefully choose its military operations. Measuring its level of resolve is one of the critical components that must be considered before future military operations.

### **Sources of Data**

Research for this thesis involved the use of the Air University library system. Several books, interviews, and outside materials were used in the completion of this work. This resulted in a comprehensive analysis of relevant data on the subjects of power and will, levels of national interest, cost-tolerance, and threat levels. All of which are essential elements needed to critically analyze levels of national resolve.

### **Conclusions reached**

The failure to properly analyze national resolve can lead a nation into committing military force without the will to withstand the cost of achieving its national objectives. This failure not only weakens the position of the nation within the world power structure, but also identifies a critical center of gravity that can endanger future military operations.

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

*It is not our power but our will and character that is being tested tonight. The question all Americans must ask and answer is this: Does the richest and strongest nation in the history of the world have the character to meet a direct challenge by a group which rejects every effort to win a just peace, ignores our warning, tramples on solemn agreements, violates the neutrality of an unarmed people, and uses our prisoners as hostages? If we fail to meet this challenge, all other nations will be on notice that despite its overwhelming power the United States, when a real crisis comes, will be found wanting..*

—Richard M.. Nixon

### Statement of Problem

In an effort to maintain its status as a world power, the United States has used its military in numerous situations around the globe. These operations have covered the full spectrum from humanitarian operations to war. In all of these operations, the world's attention has been turned to the United States to see how it meets its objectives. Some of these operations met with failure.

This paper will use these failures as examples of how the United States' lack of resolve has seriously weakened its position in the world while at the same time placing its military force more at risk in future operations. It is the position of this author that America's failure to properly assess its level of resolve before entering these operations set the stage for failure. As President Nixon stated in the epigraph, the strength of a nation is



not merely the power it possesses, but the quality of its character. These failures have signaled a deficiency of character to the world thus weakening America's position as a world power.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this paper is to explore how the United States' lack of resolve has weakened its position in the world. It will begin by examining the elements that comprise a nation's resolve. It will then use historical examples to illustrate how America failed in the arena of resolve and the ramifications of those failures. It will conclude by offering a means to assess resolve prior to entering an operation. This assessment is meant to create a starting point and spark debate, not become the definitive answer. The issue of resolve is very complex and is critical to the formation of a nation's character.

## **Need for the Study**

Every time the United States enters into an operation and fails to achieve its desired end-state, it signals a weakness to its adversaries. With the level of OOTW operations on the rise, it is important that we understand the risk in which American forces are placed. It is critical that the United States assess its level of resolve before entering an operation. This will assist in the proper selection of the courses of action thus reducing the risk of failure and unnecessary casualties.

## **Scope and Limitations**

The depth of this study will provide the reader with a clearer understanding of the complex nature of this issue. Detailed information will be incorporated from all disciplines

relevant to this field of study. This multi-discipline approach will ensure all avenues have been examined before any conclusions are reached.

## **Methodology**

Research for this study has involved a comprehensive literature review. Relevant journal articles found within the Air University library system have been used. In addition, several books, interviews, and outside materials have also been used in the completion of this work. This has resulted in a critical study that takes a broad, comprehensive approach to furthering the understanding of this issue.

## Chapter 2

### Understanding Resolve

*War is simply a continuation of political intercourse, with the addition of other means..*

—Carl Von Clausewitz

*Military action is a method used to attain a political goal. While military affairs and political affairs are not identical, it is impossible to isolate one from the other*

—Mao Tse-tung

Before this paper can begin, it is imperative that one first develop an appreciation for the complexities of resolve. Resolve is more than just a willingness to see an objective through, it is a succession of relationships and elements. It is the way that these relationships and elements interact with one another that defines the strength of a nation's resolve.

The first relationship to be examined is that of power and will. Developing a good understanding of this relationship will help the reader comprehend how a world superpower can be forced to abandon its objectives by a weaker adversary. Levels of interest, and cost-tolerance are the elements to consider in depth. It is here that one begins to explore the idea of what price a nation will pay to achieve its objective.

## Power and Will

Barry B. Hughes defines power in the simplest of terms. To him, "...power is the ability of *A* to get *B* to do *X*."<sup>1</sup> In offering this, which he states is the "...commonest and most succinct definition...", he also provides two more views of power.<sup>2</sup> The first is that of Walter S. Jones. Jones states that power is "...the ability of an actor to influence the outcome of international events to its satisfaction."<sup>3</sup> The second view belongs to Karl W. Deutsch. He states that power is "...the ability to prevail in conflict and to overcome obstacles."<sup>4</sup>

All of these definitions share one common theme. They all conclude to the satisfaction of the one who possesses the most power. Is it really that simple though? Ray S. Cline, former Director of Intelligence and Research at the Department of State and former Deputy Director of Intelligence for the Central Intelligence Agency does not think so.

To Cline, power or more accurately put perceived power, can be translated into a mathematical formula. His formula is as follows:  $P_P = (C+E+M) \times (S+W)$ .<sup>5</sup> Where  $P_P$ = perceived power;  $C$ = critical mass which is defined as population and territory;  $E$ = economic capability;  $M$  = military capability;  $S$  = strategic purpose; and  $W$  = will to purpose. As we can see from Cline's example, power is not as simple as *A* getting *B* to do *X*. In fact country "*A*" can possess superior military capability ( $M$ ), economic base ( $E$ ), population and territory ( $C$ ), and still not be able to influence country "*B*" to do "*X*". The reason for this anomaly is that country "*A*" lacks the will ( $W$ ) to use its  $C$ ,  $E$ , and  $M$  to get "*B*" to do "*X*".

Sounds confusing but it's really quite simple. Will, the critical portion of Cline's equation, is the multiplier that defines power. To possess the material portions of power (C, E, M), but lack the will to use them seriously degrades one's ability to influence the outcome of events or prevail in conflict. Power without the will to use it is useless. "Will" therefore, becomes a vital force multiplier of a nation's true power.

To better understand the relationship between power and will, let us consider the following example. A police officer possesses both a badge and a weapon. The badge symbolizes his power and authority, while the weapon gives him the ability to enforce that authority. If the police officer in the example lacks the will to use the weapon in the line of duty, his ability to perform his duty is seriously obstructed. While he still has all the authority granted by law, he may be unable to perform his duty because he lacks the will to use all the instruments of power at his disposal.

Using an example such as this, we can modify Hughes' definition as follows: Power is *A's* willingness to use all the available means to get *B* to do *X*. Will therefore becomes an extremely important component of power.

### **Levels of Interest**

The term vital national interest is freely tossed around today. But what really constitutes a vital national interest and are there various levels of interest? To examine this question closely, this paper will focus on two separate views of levels of interest in an attempt to determine if commonalties exist. The views belong to two noted scholars in this field of study, Dr. Karl Magyar and Donald E. Nuechterlein.

According to Dr. Magyar, national interests can be divided into three categories, core, intermediate, and peripheral.<sup>6</sup> Core interests are those interests that concern the physical survival of a nation. Magyar states that direct threats to core interests must be countered unilaterally with a full range of military resources if necessary.<sup>7</sup> He further alleges that core interests can be distant and indirect. In these cases, he advocates the use of the political and economic instruments of power (IOP's) along with bilateral responses before the use of direct military force.

Intermediate interests are those "...interest concern[ed with] the retention or maximization of welfare which could include serious external threats to economic security."<sup>8</sup> At this level, Magyar states that a nation should use its economic and political instruments of power before resorting to military force. He further asserts that if the use of the military is necessary, unilateral actions should be avoided.

The last of Magyar's levels is the peripheral interests. This level "...concerns a broad range of sociopolitical, ideological, religious, humanitarian, and cultural problems."<sup>9</sup> This level must never be addressed unilaterally and the initial response should always be the economic and political IOP's. If use of the military is necessary outside of the United States' hemisphere, "...it should be a collective effort by the international community and not by a US-led ad hoc alliance."<sup>10</sup>

Nuechterlein uses a much different approach than the neat, clean categorization technique used by Magyar. His technique is to assess levels of interest not only by way of category, but also by the intensity at which that interest is viewed. To accomplish this, he has created four basic categories and four transitory categories.

Neuchterlein's basic categories are:

1. Defense of the Homeland: "Protection of the people, territory, and institutions of the United States against potential foreign dangers."
2. Economic Well-being: "Promotion of U.S. international trade and investment, including protection of private interests in foreign countries."
3. Favorable World Order: "Establishment of a peaceful international environment in which disputes between nations can be resolved without resort to war and in which collective security rather than unilateral action is employed."
4. Promotion of Values: "Promulgation of a set of values that U.S. leaders believe to be universally good and worthy of emulating by other countries"<sup>11</sup>

His four categories represent the constants in his measurement of interest levels.

What changes according to Neuchterlein, is the level of intensity assigned a specific interest. To achieve this measurement, he has created a four-tiered scale of priority designed to measure the amount of value a nation attaches to a specific event or issue.<sup>12</sup>

Nuechterlein refers to this four tiered scale as transitory. He states that this term "...does not imply that an interest is present at one period of time and not another; rather, it suggests that certain specific issues falling under any one of the basic interests may receive more attention from policy-makers at some times than at others."<sup>13</sup>

Nuechterlein's transitory four-tiered scale is:

1. Survival Interest: "... where the very existence of the nation is in peril."
2. Vital Interest: "...where probable serious harm to the security and well-being of the nation will result if strong measures, including military ones, are not taken by the government within a short period of time."
3. Major Interest: "...where potential serious harm could come to the nation if no action is taken to counter an unfavorable trend abroad."
4. Peripheral Interest: "...where little if any harm to the entire nation will result if a 'wait and see' policy is adopted."<sup>14</sup>

Neuchterlein states that the one important determinant that exists between these transitory categories is the amount of time a nation has to reach a decision on a specific

course of action.<sup>15</sup> He further alleges that this intensity changes from administration to administration, thus allowing a vital national interest today to become a peripheral interest tomorrow. This allows for a very flexible framework to view national interest levels.

### **Cost-tolerance**

In relating the issue of national interest to cost-tolerance, one can safely conclude that as an issue or event rises in interest level, so rises a nation's willingness to accept cost. Using Magyar's categories for instance, a core interest would have a higher cost-tolerance than would a peripheral interest. According to Nuechterlein however, just because an issue or event falls into the defense of the homeland category does not mean it will have an associated high cost-tolerance. To him, cost-tolerance level is a combination of the basic and transitory categories.

To further understand this, let us use the 1962 Cuban missile crisis as an example. During this crisis, the United States came as close to a nuclear war as it ever has over the course of history. Had war occurred, the cost would have been extremely high for the nation. If President Kennedy however, had adopted more of a wait and see verses a hard-line approach, that would move this event from the defense of homeland/survival to defense of homeland/vital or even major. His willingness to use a "full retaliatory response" if necessary, would have decreased, thus lessening the chance of a nuclear response. The cost-tolerance level would have consequently dropped in direct relation to the level of interest assigned. We can therefore conclude that a nation's cost-tolerance is directly related not just to its level of interest but also to the intensity in which that interest is viewed.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Barry B. Hughes, *Continuity and Change in World Politics* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1991), 80.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Walter S. Jones, *The Logic of International Relations*, 5th ed. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1985), 245.

<sup>4</sup> Karl W. Deutsch, *The Analysis of International Relations*, (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 22.

<sup>5</sup> Ray S. Cline, *World Power Trends and U.S. Foreign Policy for the 1980's* (Colorado, Westview Press, 1980), 22.

<sup>6</sup> Karl P. Magyar, "Conflict in the Postcontainment Era," *War & Conflict AY97 Coursebook* (1996): 14.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Donald E Nuechterlein, *America Overcommitted: United States National Interests in the 1980s* (Kentucky, University of Kentucky, 1985), 8.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 9 -10.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 10.

## Chapter 3

### Historical Examples

*Historical examples clarify everything and also provide the best kind of proof in the empirical sciences. This is particularly true of the art of war.*

—Carl Von Clausewitz

This chapter will examine historical examples where the United States has used military forces and failed to achieved its desired end state. All the examples chosen occurred after the United States had established itself as one of the world's premier powers. Understanding this prior to reading this chapter will help one develop an appreciation for the relationship between power and will. It should also be noted that the following historical examples span the range of national interest levels and intensities. The reader will soon notice that this paper will use a combination of the Magyar and Neuchterlien typologies to analyze the following historical examples. The use of both typologies greatly assisted this researcher in identifying the essential core elements of each example as they pertain to national resolve.

#### Vietnam

Most people associate Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, with the speech of Abraham Lincoln, the 16th President of the United States. This historic speech was delivered in

November of 1863 at the dedication of a national military cemetery and became known as the Gettysburg Address.<sup>1</sup> In it, Lincoln called for “...a new birth of freedom; that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”<sup>2</sup> This was his vision for America, and now, the Gettysburg Address stands as a testimony to his dedication to achieving that end-state.

In Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, some 96 years later, another President of the United States gave an address that outlined his vision for the future.. In this speech of 4 April 1959, President Eisenhower declared that “...[o]ur national interest demands the U.S. support South Vietnam.”<sup>3</sup> This was the first of many official U.S. statements that committed the United States to preventing the fall of South Vietnam into communist hands.<sup>4</sup> It was here that unlike Lincoln, the President would fail to achieve his desired end-state.

It was not only Eisenhower who failed. The subsequent three Presidents would also fail to achieve their desire end-state. Speaking at his inaugural address in 1961 and referring to Vietnam, Kennedy declared that “[w]e shall pay any price, bear any burden. ... to assure the survival and success of liberty.”<sup>5</sup>

President Kennedy considered the defense of South Vietnam to be within the core interest of the United States—that the spread of communism was dangerous to the American way of life and would not be tolerated. While it was a distant core threat on the Magyar scale, it was still important enough to commit U.S. military forces. Furthermore, if one accepts President Kennedy’s assertion that the spread of communism was dangerous to the national security of the United States, placing it on the Neuchterlein’s

scale at the defense of the homeland/vital interest level fully justified the deployment of military forces to the region.

For the purpose of this paper, the importance of Vietnam rests not in how the U.S. fought the war, but the results of the failure. The result has been the continued shaping of U.S. foreign policy ever since the last American left Saigon on 30 April 1975 and the creation of a haunting national memory. This haunting memory has reappeared time and time again. At the conclusion of Desert Storm, President Bush declared that "...we've kicked the Vietnam syndrome once and for all"<sup>6</sup>, but we had not. In 1995 when former Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole set forth his approach to the Bosnian crisis, many Republican lawmakers protested. The reason for their protest was that Dole's endorsement of air strikes against the Serbs "...evoke[d] bitter memories of Vietnam...".<sup>7</sup>

The United States' Vietnam experience had done more than create bitter memories. It signaled to U.S. adversaries a lack of resolve. After all, American Presidents had declared U.S. involvement to be a vital national interest. Kennedy in fact, went as far as to say that any price would be paid and any burden endured to achieve success. Tens of thousands of American soldiers paid the ultimate price, the nation shouldered a heavy burden, and still South Vietnam fell into communist hands.

The signal sent and received was that the United States would not accept heavy casualties in operations such as Vietnam. Cost-tolerance became a very important center of gravity (COG) for the United States. Adversaries learned that by raising the cost (casualties) of an operation, they could weaken the resolve of the United States. This was one of the most important results of the Vietnam experience.

## Beirut, Lebanon

The United States failed to heed the lesson it learned in Vietnam and doomed itself to repeat its mistake. On 23 October 1983, this next mistake would take the form of 241 dead United States Marines. They were killed by a suicide car bomb while conducting operations in Beirut, Lebanon.<sup>8</sup>

The United States entered Beirut as part of a multinational force (MNF) consisting of France, Italy, and the United States. This MNF was tasked to restore peace following the Israeli invasion in June 1982. Specifically, they were to get the PLO Army out of Beirut thus preventing the need for further hostilities by Israeli forces.<sup>9</sup> The mission was well defined and executed. In the words of Casper Weinberger, “[t]he MNF went there with everyone’s consent, did its job quickly and professionally, and *left* [original emphases] on Sept. 14.”<sup>10</sup>

This initial American involvement was clearly aimed at gaining regional stability and influence within the Middle East, the vital oil producing region within the world. This placed this operation at the intermediate level on the Magyar scale and at the favorable world order/major interest on the Neuchterlein scale.

In late September 1982, President Reagan ordered the Marines back into Lebanon. This time their mission was to act as a buffer between Israeli and Syrian forces.<sup>11</sup> This mission was expanded on 17 May 1983. On this date, President Reagan stated that the United States was in Lebanon “...to help the new government of Lebanon maintain order until it can organize its military and its police and assume control of its borders and its own internal security.”<sup>12</sup> The United States had formally stated its resolve to helping maintain the stability of the Lebanese Government.

The United States' commitment to peace in Lebanon would come to an abrupt end in February 1984, three months after the bombing of the Marine barracks.<sup>13</sup> Ironically, the withdrawal of the Marines had been discussed prior to the bombing. However, the U.S. State Department insisted they remain because they feared "...their withdrawal [would] signal weakness."<sup>14</sup>

Their eventual withdrawal under less than tolerable circumstances did in fact signal weakness. This time the weakness was directly anchored in the United States' unwillingness to accept casualties in the cause it deemed so necessary. Again, the adversaries of the United States sat-up and took notice to this important COG.

## **Somalia**

A more recent example of America's lack of resolve began on December 4, 1992. It was on this date that President Bush announced that U.S. forces would be sent to Somalia. In his address to the nation he stated that "...the United States cannot right the world's wrongs. But we also know that some crises in the world cannot be resolved without American involvement, that American action is often necessary as a catalyst for broader involvement of the community of nations."<sup>15</sup>

The American involvement he referred to resulted in the deployment of almost 26,000 troops to Somalia. Their mission as established by the President in his address to the nation was limited in nature. He stated that: "[o]ur mission has a limited objective, to open the supply routes, to get the food moving, and prepare the way for U.N. peacekeeping force to keep it moving. This operation is not open-ended. We will not stay one day longer than is absolutely necessary"<sup>16</sup>

President Bush's statement and the initial actions of the deployed forces clearly illustrated that this stage of the operation was humanitarian in nature. The focus on the humanitarian effort would appear to place this operation in the peripheral level of interest on both the Magyar and Neuchterlein scale. However, there are some who feel that the United States entered Somalia not solely based on humanitarian aspirations. According to Dr. Magyar, the strategic location of Somalia establishes the U.S. interest at the intermediate if not distant core level.<sup>17</sup> This movement on the Magyar scale would also cause it to move to the favorable world order/major level on the Neuchterlein scale. Magyar's argument gains strength as we further examine how the U.S. mission in Somalia was allowed to creep into a nation building phase.

The initial humanitarian phase appeared to be quite successful. By the time that Lieutenant General Johnston, USMC, handed over command of the operation to the United Nations on 4 May 1993, food was reaching the majority of towns in need.<sup>18</sup> There was the occasional run-in with Somali warlords such as Aidid. As Keith Richburg stated in the Washington Post though, "...Aidid occasionally tried to pose a military challenge -and each time the warlord and his militia were slapped down hard."<sup>19</sup>

Following the change of command, close to 20,000 U.S. forces redeployed back to their home stations, signaling what would appear to be the end to a successful operation. However, on 5 June 1993, Aidid's men ambushed and killed 24 U.N. peacekeepers from Pakistan. This resulted in a more aggressive use of force by the U.S. in the form of aerial attacks on the Aidid clan. This also marked a visible shift in U.S. policy.

According to Christopher Gacek, "...the new military action marked a shift from a successful humanitarian mission to one in which the military pacification of Aidid's

political organization became paramount.”<sup>20</sup> This view was shared by Michael Lind of *The New Republic*. Lind stated that “[t]he Clinton administration expanded a relatively successful humanitarian relief operation into a more ambitious nation building effort....”<sup>21</sup>

This change in policy was stated more clearly by Secretary of Defense Les Aspin in a 27 August 1993, address to the Center for Strategic and International Studies. In his speech, he stated that the U.S. goal was “...to restore order to south Mogadishu and to rebuild the country’s shattered economy and political structure.”<sup>22</sup> He further asserted that when three conditions were met that U.S. forces would possibly be withdrawn. Those conditions were: 1) Restore order in South Mogadishu; 2) Get the warlords to give up their heavy weapons; and 3) establish a police force in large cities.<sup>23</sup> Clearly the U.S. focus was on rebuilding Somalia, not on humanitarian operations.

In a very prophetic commentary in September 1993, Casper Weinberger stated that “[t]he longer this [Somalia rebuilding operation] continues, the more certain it is there will be another tragedy like the one in Lebanon.”<sup>24</sup> That is precisely what happen the very next month.

On 3 October 1993, U.S. Army Rangers engaged in a fire fight with some of Aidid’s men while launching an effort to capture the warlord. This action resulted in eighteen dead U.S. soldiers and another twenty-eight wounded. To further exacerbate the tragedy, the body of one of the soldiers was dragged through the streets of Mogadishu for all the world to watch on CNN.

Shortly after this incident, President Clinton announced the phased withdrawal of U.S. forces from Somalia that would conclude by 31 March 1994.<sup>25</sup> As Michael Lind



stated, “[o]nce again the U.S. had failed to force the reassembly of a broken society at gunpoint; once again, U.S. troops engaged in a humiliating retreat.”<sup>26</sup>

More importantly, the United States signaled its lack of resolve to the world once again. A signal which according to Gordon and Trainor had already been picked up by Aidid before the United States’ involvement in Somalia. In their book “The General’s War”, they state that “[i]n Somalia, Gen. Mohammed Farah Aidid used ...[the] strategy of trying to draw out the confrontation, bleed Americans, and wait for public opinion to turn against military involvement. With no oil supplies at stake and the Americans supporting the mission more out of charity than animus toward a third-world tyrant, Aidid’s approach worked.”<sup>27</sup>

## **Summary**

The historical examples used in this chapter crossed a broad spectrum of military operations. Their selection illustrates just how critical resolve is to operational success. In addition, they also depicted how mission creep can negatively influence a nation’s level of resolve as it did in Somalia.

Most importantly, these historical examples demonstrated that just as tactical and operational strategies must be congruent with national objectives, a nation’s level of resolve must also be congruent with its national objectives. If it is not, failure is almost assured. These case studies also validated just how useful both the Magyar and Neuchterlein scales can be in determining where a given operation resides as it pertains to national interest. Their work serves as the basis for analyzing national resolve.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> James L. Stokesbury, *A Short History of the Civil War* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1995), 211.

<sup>2</sup> Shelby Foote, *The Civil War: A Narrative* (New York: Random House, 1958), 830.

<sup>3</sup> Franklin D. Margiotta, ed., *Brassey's Encyclopedia of Military History and Biography* (Washington: Brassey's, 1994), 1030.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Nigel Holloawy, "Withdrawal Symptoms," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 11 May 1995, 29.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Carroll J. Doherty, "Dole Takes a Political Risk in Cusade to Aid Bosnia," *Defense & Foreign Policy*, 11 Mar. 1995, 751.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Lind, "Beirut to Bosnia," *The New Republic*, 18 Dec. 1995, 20.

<sup>9</sup> Casper W. Weinberger, "Somaila - Clinton's Lebanon; and Bosnia," *Forbes*, 13 Sep. 1993, 35.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Lind, 20.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Weinberger, 35.

<sup>15</sup> Christopher M. Gacek, *The Logic of Force* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 315.

<sup>16</sup> Michael Wines, "Bush Declares Goal in Somalia is to Save Thousands," *New York Times*, 5 Dec. 1992, A1.

<sup>17</sup> Karl P. Magyar, interview with author, Nov. 1996

<sup>18</sup> Gacek, 317.

<sup>19</sup> Keith B. Richburg, "American Casualties in Somalia: A Policy Time Bomb Explodes," *Washington Post*, 21 Aug. 1993, sec. A, p. 1.

<sup>20</sup> Gacek, 318.

<sup>21</sup> Lind, 20.

<sup>22</sup> Eric Schmitt, "U.S. Forces to Stay in Somalia to End Warlord Violence," *New York Times*, 28 Aug. 1993, A1.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Weinberger, 35.

<sup>25</sup> Kenneth Allard, *Somalia Operations: Lessons Learned* (Washington D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1995), 20.

<sup>26</sup> Lind, 35.

<sup>27</sup> Michael R. Gordon and General Bernard E. Trainor, *The Generals' War* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1995), 470.

## Chapter 4

### Critical Analysis

*The influence of theoretical truths on practical life is always exerted more through critical analysis than through doctrine.*

—Carl Von Clausewitz

*When I came to the State Department I thought for a time, when talking to the Axis diplomats, that they were looking me in the eyes; but I soon discovered that they were looking over my shoulders at our armed forces and appraising our strength. Here, I came to feel, was the controlling factor in their acts and utterances towards us.*

—Cordell Hull

Former United States Secretary of State

The statement by Cordell Hull is just as true today as it was during World War II. The adversaries of the United States are still looking over its shoulders in an attempt to assess its national strength. As this paper has asserted, the strength of a nation lies not only in the power it possesses, but also in its willingness to use that power to achieve its national objectives. The case studies in the previous chapter illustrate instances where the United States failed to achieve its objectives and in doing so, focused attention on an important center of gravity (COG). This COG, as Gorton and Trainor pointed out, has been used against the United States. It is the Achilles heel that will continue to be exploited by future adversaries unless something is done to bolster national resolve.

The strategy America's adversaries use to attack this COG has placed its military forces in more danger today than at any other time in history. The recent terrorist attacks in Saudi Arabia are classic examples. There is little doubt that the aim of these attacks was to force a withdrawal of American troops from Arab soil. The attackers hoped to raise the cost of being there to an unacceptable level, thus forcing America to withdraw and abandon its objective. In other words, they questioned America's national resolve.

How does one turn back the hands of time and correct the mistakes of the past? There is no easy answer to this question. What there is however, is a starting point. This chapter will focus on the development of a means to assess resolve prior to committing military forces. This assessment is the starting point. A means by which the United States can evaluate its resolve and adjust its objectives and courses of action (COA's) as necessary to ensure mission success.

## **Quantification**

This researcher first set out to create a model that could be used to assess resolve. However, it was quickly learned that any model devised was too ambiguous and failed to produce the desired result. This brought to light that the whole issue of national resolve was very ambiguous due to the nature of its elements (national interest and cost-tolerance).

This ambiguity led to the development of a new approach. Instead of a model, why not try to quantify the elements of resolve and create a mathematical formula that could be used to predict the United States' level of resolve. This new approach brought forth some interesting challenges. In particular, how does one quantify resolve?

## **Levels of National Interest**

Fortunately, the works of Dr. Magyar and Neuchterlein have paved the way to quantify levels of national interest. Using a combination of their work, one is able to assess national interest by using Magyar's categories and Neuchterlein's intensity levels. This approach allows one to understand how various competing interests are sometimes thrust to the front of the national agenda ahead of others.

Both the category and intensity of the individual interest set its value to the nation. For instance, an event that can be categorized at the core level with a survival intensity will have a greater value than a peripheral event with a major intensity. The quantification for level of national interest therefore becomes the national interest category (C) plus its intensity (I).

## **Cost-tolerance**

The second step in developing the formula is how to quantify cost-tolerance. On the surface, this does not sound too difficult. After all, if it is a core interest, one would expect a nation's cost-tolerance to be high. If however it is a peripheral interest, then cost-tolerance is expected to be low. The problem that arises is defining what constitutes high, and what constitutes low? This inherent problem is revealed when we examine the success of the U.S. in the Gulf War.

Only 147 Americans died due to combat related injuries during the Gulf War.<sup>1</sup> That is less than the number of individuals who died in the Oklahoma City bombing. According to Gordon and Trainor, the "...Gulf conflict created new expectations for low casualties in warfare in the minds of the [U.S.] public and within the military establishment."<sup>2</sup> They further allege that the low casualty rate in the Gulf War has created a new assumption in

the Pentagon today. That assumption is “...that any military incursion must be low in cost to be politically feasible. While low casualties are desirable, the expectation that losses will be minimal on a fluid battlefield may inhibit the future use of force as an instrument of power.”<sup>3</sup>

This new expectation of low casualties has made it impossible to absolutely quantify cost-tolerance. After all, is a 147 casualties high, medium, or low? To what do you compare it that would allow one to calculate future casualties to create a basis to form an inference?

This is where the concept of “fuzzy logic” can help. The use of fuzzy logic allows us to take the paradox of a gray area and convert it to simple arithmetic.<sup>4</sup> What this means is that while one cannot place accurate levels of casualties next to specific cost-tolerance levels, you can assess values for each level. For instance, it can be assumed that if the United States enters an operation with a high cost-tolerance, it is willing to accept a greater loss than if it entered an operation with a low cost-tolerance. Therefore, a high cost-tolerance operation has a higher value than that of a low or medium operation. This allows us to quantify cost-tolerance (CT) not with specific numbers of casualties, but by rank ordering a nation’s willingness to absorb a specific cost for a stated objective.

### **Level of Threat**

While it is not a specific element of resolve, determining the level of threat is critical to calculating if a nation possesses the correct level of resolve. To merely quantify the first two elements and suggest that they derive a means to determine national resolve would be misleading. After all, a nation can conduct a successful peripheral/major

operation with a low cost tolerance. What helps to determine if that operation will be successful is the threat environment in which it will take place.

One can assume for instance, that if the environment consists of a high threat, military forces would be in greater danger than if the threat environment were low. Therefore, a peripheral/major operation with a low cost-tolerance conducted in a high threat area would be less likely to succeed than if the same operation was conducted in a low threat area. That is because a nation's cost-tolerance could quickly be exceeded in a low cost operation in a high threat area as was the case in both Beirut and Somalia. From this, we can logically conclude that a low threat environment is more desirable than a high threat environment and therefore should receive a higher value.

### **The Formula**

The formula for determining national resolve can be summed up quite simply as a systematic way to think about a complex issue. It is intended to be a starting point, not the panacea. The values that are assigned to the individual elements reflect a subjective judgment on the part of the author just as its application will require the judgment of the user. This in no way lessens the effectiveness for which it was created.

The formula for determining national resolve requires the use of some very simple quantification techniques. The method is designed to produce a sum that reflects the level of national resolve. Each subcategory of an element has a specific range. This range could be broken down by more precisely defining a subcategory. For instance the subcategory of peripheral interest could be more precisely defined by creating specific missions that comprise that category. Each of these missions could be rank ordered and

assigned a value that reflects their importance to the nation but still falls within the stated range of the formula. The formula is therefore adaptable to the needs of the individual.

### Equation

The equation for determining national resolve is as follows:

$$NR = C + I + CT + TL$$

The elements of the equation are defined as:

1. NR = National Resolve
2. C = National Interest Category as define by Dr. Magyar
3. I = Level of Intensity as defined by Nuechterlien
4. CT = Level of Cost-tolerance
5. TL = Threat Level

The values of each element's subcategories are as follows:

#### National Interest:

1. Core Interest = +30
2. Intermediate Interest = +20
3. Peripheral Interest = +10

#### Level of Intensity:

1. Survival = +20
2. Vital = +15
3. Major = +10
4. Peripheral = +5

#### Levels of Cost-tolerance:

1. High = + 20
2. Medium = +0
3. Low = -20

#### Threat Level:

1. High = -20
2. Medium = +0
3. Low = +20

In using the equation, a positive sum indicates the appropriate level of resolve necessary to further pursue a specific course of action. It is not a guarantee of success, but merely an indication that the elements of resolve are congruent. A negative number indicates a lack of congruency and therefore an indication that resolve is inadequate.



## Historical Application

The application of the formula to historical examples will further illustrate how it is used. It is important for the reader to keep in mind that the levels used in these examples are the subjective determination of the author based on the interpretation of historical events.

In examining the Vietnam War during the early days, one finds that it is rated at the distant core level, vital intensity, high cost-tolerance, and a high threat level. This equates to:  $30 + 15 + 20 - 20 = 45$ . This shows that at the beginning, national resolve was sufficient to continue our involvement. If one uses the formula in the latter years however, a dramatic change can be observed. The conflict would now be rated at the distant core level, vital intensity, low cost-tolerance, and high threat level. This equates to:  $30 + 15 - 20 - 20 = -5$ . National resolve at this point was insufficient to continue with military involvement in the conflict.

If one applies the formula to Beirut, similar results are found. When the United States was part of the MNF, the operation could be rated at the intermediate level, major intensity, medium cost-tolerance, and medium threat level. This equates to:  $20 + 10 + 0 + 0 = 30$ . At this time, one finds that the elements of national resolve were congruent and therefore produced a positive sum.

When the operational objectives were changed and America's involvement was prolonged, a change occurred. With its new objectives, the operational rating is changed to the intermediate level, major intensity, low cost-tolerance, and high threat level. The changes in cost-tolerance and threat levels are directly related to the controversy

surrounding the United States' involvement and the appearance of its taking sides within the region. These changes produced the following results:  $20 + 10 - 20 - 20 = -10$ .

In Somalia, similar results are again observed. At the start, when involvement was primarily limited to humanitarian operations, the operation could be described at the peripheral level, major intensity, low cost-tolerance, and low threat level. This equates to:  $10 + 10 - 20 + 20 = 20$ . The positive sum indicates that the elements of resolve were congruent and portrayed a positive national will.

After the mission was allowed to creep into the nation building phase, the sum changed. With these changes, the operation is rated at the intermediate level, major interest, low cost-tolerance, and high threat level. Once again, the low cost-tolerance is directly related to the controversy of America's involvement at home. The change in threat level is due to the aggressive nature with which the United States pursued Aidid. The equation thus becomes:  $20 + 10 - 20 - 20 = -10$ . As with the previous examples, the negative sum illustrates a lack of national resolve as it pertains to this operation.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Colin L. Powell and Joseph E. Persico, *My American Journey* (New York: Random House, 1995), 527.

<sup>2</sup> Michael R. Gordon and General Bernard E. Trainor, *The Generals' War* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1995), 469.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 470.

<sup>4</sup> Bart Kosko, *Fuzzy Thinking: The New Science of Fuzzy Logic* (New York: Hyperion, 1993), 95.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusions

*Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear;*

—1 Samuel 17: 34–36

This paper has shown how America's lack of resolve has weakened her position as a world power. Today, the allies of the United States cast a suspicious glance at America every time it enters into a military operation. They question not only the motives of the United States, but also its level of commitment. This suspicion stems directly from the track record America has established in the past as it relates to national resolve. One need only look at the European response to America's involvement in Bosnia to see this fact to be true.

America's lack of resolve has also begun to shape its foreign policy. It now defines military involvement by end dates, not end states. The United States now formulates exit strategies before entering into military operations as opposed to formulating strategies for achievement of its national objectives. Currently, America's policies are aimed at cutting its losses, a point well known by our adversaries.

This paper has also presented case studies that document the consequences of the lack of national resolve in military operations. One of which is the identification of a critical center of gravity. America's adversaries know as this paper has pointed out, that low cost-tolerance equates to low resolve. Therefore, they exploit this COG by employing tactics such as terrorism to make the United States reach an unacceptable level of cost. The case studies in this paper have graphically illustrated this point. For further examples, one need only look as far as the bombings in Saudi Arabia to see that these tactics are being employed against this critical COG.

What is the answer to this dilemma America finds itself in today? The United States needs to analyze its level of resolve before entering into a military operation. Whether or not the formula presented in this paper is used is not important. What is important is the definitive measurement of America's resolve prior to the employment of military forces. If the proper level does not exist, then the United States needs to consider using one of the other instruments of power and avoid the costly mistakes of the past.

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